THE DREAM STORY IN ENGLISH PROSE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

BY

JOHN WILSON LEWIS

A.B., University of Illinois, 1931
M.A., University of Illinois, 1933

AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN
ENGLISH IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS, 1945

URBANA, ILLINOIS
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What is the dream story? and which short prose fictions of eminent British authors of the nineteenth century are dream stories? The dream occurs in the literature of all ages, and those works in which the dream element is notable are sometimes called the literature of dreams, or dream and vision literature. There are a few general works, of a critical or historical nature, which survey this tradition and comment upon numerous authors whose lives and writings are affected by dreams. The most important are Frederick Prescott's *The Poetic Mind* (New York, 1922), Frank Lucas' *The Decline and Fall of the Romantic Ideal* (New York, 1936), and Walter de la Mare's *Behold, This Dreamer!* (New York, 1939). Of particular interest are seven or eight special studies. We have two dissertations by classical students: William Messer's *The Dream in Homer and Greek Tragedy* (New York, 1918), and John Stearns's *Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama* (Lancaster, Pa., 1927). Studies in Medieval and Early Modern dream literature have been made by George Kelchner and Walter Curry: Kelchner's *Dreams in Old Norse Literature and Their Affinities in Folklore* (Cambridge University, 1935), and Curry's essay on Chaucer's four "dream-poems," "Chauntecleer and Pertelote on Dreams" (*Englische Studien,* LVIII, 1924). Meyer Abrams and Herbert Schueler have brief but important works on the nineteenth century: *The Milk of Paradise. The Effect of Opium Visions on the Works of De Quincey, Crabbe, Francis Thompson, and Coleridge* (Harvard University, 1934), and *Hebbel and the Dream* (Menasha, Wis., 1941). Finally there are two interesting essays on twentieth-century dream literature: "The French Novel" (*Times Literary Supplement,* XXXIII, 1934), and Charles Koëlla's "La Puissance du rêve chez Julien Green" (*PMLA,* LIV, 1939). We have studies of the dream in epic, drama, saga, poem, and novel, but there is no study of the dream story.

The works I have mentioned, and a few others less important, do refer to several nineteenth-century English authors whose works *may* contain fictitious narratives that I call dream stories; but they have no full discussion of any of these authors. They also mention several prose compositions which may prove to be dream stories. The dream stories cited, however, are usually the few well-known ones, such as De Quincey's *Dream-Fugue* and *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow,* Lamb's *Dream-Children,* Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll,* Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass,* and Kipling's *Brushwood Boy.* Comparatively few dream stories are mentioned, and none is analyzed. Indeed, most

scholarship on dream literature is concerned with poetry, for obvious reasons, and very little attention is given prose fiction, especially the short story. Addison and Johnson, eighteenth-century writers of some importance in the history of the modern short story, are seldom mentioned, though Addison wrote twenty dream allegories with the dream framework, and Johnson wrote three. Consequently, in our approach to the nineteenth-century dream story, we are compelled to make an independent study of the pre-romantic story with the dream element, especially Johnson's, which is more dreamlike and less artificial than Addison's. These two writers may be called the forerunners of the dream story; and Johnson's "The Vision of Theodore, the Hermit of Teneriffe, found in his Cell" anticipates the nineteenth-century dream story.

The students of the literature of dreams, a tradition of which our dream story is, I think, a part, do not give us an adequate definition of dream literature: their methods of study are either biographical or technical, and no complete definition is attempted. Some students seem to explain dream literature as literary elaboration of actual dreams. But such a definition is incomplete; very few works like *Kubla Khan* and *Dr. Jekyll* are known to be the results of dreams. Other students, interested in technique, study the dream as a literary device, as a means of plot-motivation or characterization. But in many literary works not remarkably dreamlike we find this technical device. To define dream literature as literature which uses a dream is to make a mistake similar to that of Freudian psychologists who regard all literature as dreams, on the assumption that the source is dreams. Several students do describe dream literature as "dreamlike"; yet none has made a systematic study of the dream qualities in literature. Although some elements of the literature studied are presented as elements of dreams, the methods of investigation and criticism are, on the whole, biographical and technical rather than psychological. Consequently, since I am interested in the "dreamlike" character of literature, I must consult the psychologists, as well as the literary scholars, before I can set up criteria for the dream story.

Among these psychologists, as I call them, are such original contributors to dream psychology as Freud and Jung; such students of dreams as Havelock Ellis and Marie de Manacéïne; psychologists like Bergson and James, who are also philosophers, and philosophers of mysticism or religious experience; Evelyn Underhill and Aelfrida Tillyard and Rudolf Otto, who have studied dreaming or visionary experiences of mystics; students of mythology, such as Müller, Tylor, and Durkheim, who can not discuss the primitive mind without making significant references to dreams or the dreaming mind; and finally, literary men who, like De Quincey, Lamb, and A.E. (George Russell), have dreamed much and an-

alyzed their dreams. These psychologists can tell us what the dream is, if anybody can. At least I can find in their works descriptions and ideas which are useful to me in my analysis of the dream story.

Besides these preliminary and supplementary studies in dream literature, including work by Addison and Johnson, and in dream psychology, there is of course the most important investigation of the works, and biography and criticism, of several nineteenth-century authors who might have written dream stories. The three or four related studies in literature and psychology are, obviously, huge tasks and can not be performed with thoroughness; however, they need not be superficial if we remember our specific purpose: to define the dream story in the works of well-known British authors of the nineteenth century. By "story" I mean a fictitious prose narrative, having a single effect, which can be read at one sitting. (The dream story is usually very short, and it is seldom as long as the shortest "novelette," thirty or thirty-five thousand words. Thus I do not consider such long, though perhaps dreamlike, fictions as *Pilgrim's Progress,* the Brontë novels, MacDonald's *Lilith, Peter Ibbetson,* Joyce's novels, and Huxley's *Time Must Have a Stop.*) By "dream story" I mean a story that is especially dreamlike, and has several characteristics which psychologists observe in dreams; the dream quality pervades the whole composition, or colors the central theme. Perhaps we shall see that the dream story is a prose fiction, unique in form and style, which reveals or indicates a tendency to a certain way of feeling, thinking, and acting.

Before I characterize the dream stories considered, I shall list them, for the convenience of the reader:

William Blake (1757-1827)

1783.....Contemplation
1783.....The Couch of Death
c.1793.....The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859)

1821; 1856....Easter Sunday Dream (from *Confessions*)
1821; 1856....A Tumultuous Dream (from *Confessions*)
1838.....The Household Wreck
1845; 1853....Dream-Echoes of these Infant Experiences
1845; 1853....Dream-Echoes Fifty Years Later
1845; 1854....Dream-vision of the Infinite as it reveals itself in the Chambers of Space
c.1845–59.....Who is this Woman that beckoneth and warneth me from the Place where she is, and in whose Eyes is Woeful Remembrance? I guess who she is
1845; 1871....Memorial Suspiria
1845; 1871....Savannah-la-Mar
1845; 1871....Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow
1849; 1854....Dream-Fugue: founded on the preceding theme of sudden death

1855.....The Dream
1856.....The Daughter of Lebanon

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834)

1822.....Dream-Children; A Reverie
1823.....The Child Angel. A Dream
1825.....A Vision of Horns

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR (1775-1864)

1833.....The Dream of Euthymedes (from *Scipio, Polybius, and Panaetius*)
1837.....The Dream of Boccaccio (from *The Pentameron*)
1837.....The Dream of Petrarca
1844.....A Vision

WILLIAM MORRIS (1834-1896)

1856.....The Story of the Unknown Church
1856.....Lindenborg Pool
1856.....A Dream
1856.....The Hollow Land: A Tale
1887.....A Dream of John Ball

LEWIS CARROLL (CHARLES L. DODGSON) 1832-1898

1865.....Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
1871.....Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Saw There
1889.....Sylvie and Bruno
1893.....Sylvie and Bruno Concluded

JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

1866.....The Pyramid Builders
1866.....Crystal Caprice
1868.....May-day Party (from *The Mystery of Life and its Arts*)

WALTER PATER (1839-1894)

1878.....The Child in the House
1886.....Denys-l'Auxerrois

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

1878.....Will o' the Mill
1885.....Olalla
1886.....Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
1888.....A Chapter on Dreams

RUDYARD KIPLING (1865-1936)

1884.....The Dream of Duncan Parrenness
1895; 1898....The Brushwood Boy
1904.....They

FRANCIS THOMPSON (1859-1907)

c.1890.....Moestitiae Encomium
c.1890.....Finis Coronat Opus

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1930)

1893.....The Golden Age
1893.....The Eaters of Precious Stones

1893.....Our Lady of the Hills
1896.....Rosa Alchemica
1896; 1904....Hanrahan's Vision
1896; 1904....The Death of Hanrahan
1902.....A Voice
1903.....Red Hanrahan

A.E. (George Russell) 1867-1935

1893.....The Meditation of Ananda
1893.....The Mask of Apollo
1894.....The Midnight Blossom
1894.....The Cave of Lilith
1894.....The Story of a Star
1897.....The Hero in Man
1897.....The Childhood of Apollo
1897.....A Dream of Angus Oge
1923.....The Interpreters
1933.....The Avatars

Fiona Macleod (William Sharp) 1855-1905

1896.....The Last Supper
1896.....Cathal of the Woods
1899.....The Woman with the Net
1899.....Dalua
1899.....By the Yellow Moonrock
1904.....The Lynn of Dreams
1904.....Mäya
1904.....A Dream
1904.....The Woman at the Cross-Ways
1905.....Beyond the Blue Septentrions. Two Legends of the Polar Stars

Perhaps some students would add to or subtract from this list; I have had my doubts about the inclusion of a few stories—Landor's *A Vision,* Macleod's *The Woman with the Net,* and Kipling's *The Brushwood Boy* and *They*—and I have decided at last to reject a few stories. But after careful consideration, from all points of view, I have chosen these seventy-four works as the basis for my study of the dream story, or dream phantasy. (When Masson refers to De Quincey's most dreamlike writings as "dream-phantasy," he is thinking chiefly of the dream stories.) These are dream stories because their elements, qualities, laws, and values are, to an appreciable degree, those of dreams or dreaming experiences studied by the psychologists. The dream qualities, or characteristics, are indicated or summarized in the following paragraphs.

Like the dream, the dream story is autobiographical; it discloses aspects of an author's life and personality seldom revealed in other prose fiction. In the first place, the dream phantasy reveals the dream life of its author. Dream life is a kind of experience, and an experience valued highly by several of our authors, who proclaim the desirability of developing the dreaming faculty. It is not always easy, and sometimes impossible,

to determine whether a dream story is an elaboration of an actual dream, a product of creative processes similar to the processes of dreams and visions, or an imitation of dreams. The sources of several stories are clearly indicated by the authors' recordings of the actual dreams from which the stories were derived. Sometimes an author, referring to a story he has written, speaks of a dream origin. But even when we are sure the story has a dream origin, we may not know how much of the story was dreamed, or we may hesitate to say the story is dream-inspired when the actual dream forms only a small part of the story. Of less authority than the author's word is the biographer's or critic's statement that the story has a dream origin. Most puzzling, perhaps, is the story whose source is either dreaming or something very much like dreaming; author or biographer describe the mental processes during the creation of the story, but we can not decide whether they are dreaming processes or normal, waking processes. Although we are not certain that some stories are transcripts of dreaming experience, we can well believe that they are influenced by, or reflect, the dream life the authors had. In the second place, the dream story reveals the waking life of its author, the forces deep within his personality. Lasting impressions made by people, places, and events reappear in dream phantasy, transfigured or with new significance. Secret desires are fulfilled — desires and deep yearnings also transfigured or idealized — desires for love, friend, child, earthly paradise. Desires are often intangible, likewise the personal frustrations and conflicts. These, upon analysis, are sometimes profound, universal forces. The "contraries" appear in various forms — the ideal and the actual, the real and the image, good and evil, heaven and hell. But the dual, antagonistic forces do not destroy the integrity of the author, or the unity of the dream story; the story is really a dream story, though waking personality is expressed, and it reveals both dreaming and waking experiences, which are sometimes indistinguishable.

The autobiographical quality is only one criterion of the dream story; the complementary quality is the mythical or racial. The dream world is a creation of not one dreamer, unless he is God, but of the race of man. The dream theatre is a mythic world projected and animated by a self that is ancestral as well as personal. Through primitive, childlike processes of self-projection and sympathy, the dreaming mind produces dream characters which are dual or multiple selves — doubles and counterparts, like sympathetic organs of the body; separately they are universal concepts, or archetypes, and together they are a composite — they are manifestations of one whole, call it the self or what you will. The "properties" and scenery of the projected dream play are almost as animate as the characters. The primitive trait of empathy, whose natural consequence is

animism, seems to exist in the subconscious or half-conscious mind of dreamer and dream-story writer. The projected objects are a part of the dreaming mind. Animals, natural objects, events, and all nature are "impregnated with humanity," or naively accepted as bearing some relation to man. There is a natural, or magical, kinship between man and nature; and even the malignant aspects of nature fascinate and charm. The world is "full of souls"; it is *anima mundi.* The dreamer becomes one with the universe — the earth and perhaps the cosmos; the dream theatre and its creator are one and the same, or else one is the reflection of the other. The mythical dream theatre is the child's world, for the child knows no barriers between self and not-self, and he accepts, with wonderment, his universe. The dream story is "a plea for the child," and reveals the childlike mind required of one who would pass into and beyond the mythic world of the race of man. In the mythical dream story, or "dream-legend," is the sense of "the infinite behind the finite," the "Perception of the Infinite"; and the picture, the transcript, of this perception is a picture of supernatural figures, or gods. The strange and supernatural beings of the dream story are incarnations of human qualities that are permanent for the race. (Some dream-phantasy creations are new additions to mythology.) The supernatural is necessarily indestructible. The concepts and images of the dream story are projections of the racial, the permanent, universal man. The mythic world of our stories is thus one man's world, and Man himself. Through primitive processes of self-projection and animation, the childlike man, the dreamer, makes known and contemplates himself the spiritual universe. Blake calls this essential, transcendent self the "Poetic Genius" and Christ "the greatest man"; A.E. calls it "one Heavenly Man" or the "ancestral self;" Jung calls it the "collective unconscious" or "Collective Psyche," and he personifies it as "a collective human being."

The writing of dream phantasy is, as De Quincey says, extremely difficult; it is difficult to express the indefinable "Collective Psyche," which is both personal and impersonal, autobiographical and mythical. The writer's technique must be that of expressionism, a technique suggested by dreams themselves, and the writer must have the freedom of the poet, who is himself, perhaps, a dreamer and a primitive. Like the metaphysical poet and the daring myth-maker, the dream-story writer blends concrete and abstract; his imagery is vivid yet strangely intangible. He uses both private and traditional symbols which compress the remote and the near, and have alternative "meanings," like the story itself and the dream. To express the dreaming Psyche he is compelled to speak figuratively: the empathic processes yield numerous personifications; the dreaming mind is naturally metaphorical; the freed, dreaming memory combines disparates in the metaphysical image. And he has the "license" of the poet — the

license held by child and dreamer — to use neologisms, puns, and inversions, which make strained, strange efforts toward the expression of the inexpressible Psyche. The kaleidoscopic sequence of "dissociated" dream images has the occult law of causation which governs poetry; the poet's excess of imagery and his arbitrary or occult combinations are characteristic of the dream story. Surprise and shock delight or dismay. But typical is the modified surprise that variety brings: like the dreaming dual personality, the double effect of dismay and acquiescence creates a complex harmony; and puzzlement and inconsequence charm. Obscurity of style perplexes yet fascinates, and psychic narrative may be as intriguing as overt action. The whole sequence, the whole structure, of the dream phantasy obscures its own unity, offers various interpretations, but discovers to the occult eye the coherence and unity which also reside in the Psyche of two worlds. Dream phantasy has its own law, and, according to Saintsbury, this is the law of prose rhythm, "the greatest possible *variety* with the least possible *disturbance.*" Kaleidoscopic images melt, and similar forms recur. The sequence, like music, is a complex of recurring elements — ideas, images, word sounds, grammatical units, and time intervals. The dream phantasy is a prose poem. The expressionistic dream story is a poetic prose which strives to fuse disparates and harmonize opposites, and thus reveal the inner and whole self, the inexpressible Man.

Other "laws" besides the law of causality operate within the dreaming, remembering mind as centripetal forces in the interests of the occult self, the Heavenly Man. These are the laws of the transcendental world of our dream stories. In accordance with a dream law of translation, the dreamer with "cleansed senses" translates one sense, or one sphere of existence, in terms of another, and translates art into reality; or he may be transported to the other world by a similar law, that of levitation. By the dream law of space and time he has his own space-time measurements, or dispenses with all measurement. By the prophetic law of personality he integrates his past, future, and present self; he remembers what he has forgotten, "memory works both ways," and past and future meet in the ideal present self. By the prophetic law of individuality he extends into the past and future of the race, finding himself any where and any time; he "pre-exists" in a "past" time, nearer to a lost paradise, or in a "future" time that shows the gate to a paradise to be regained. In accordance with a law of communication — divination and telepathy — he communes with the "dead," the spirits of the other world, and with the living souls. In the story of dream and vision there is an extension of the self and, in other symbolism, a concentration, so that all elements — times, spaces, selves — find their whole being and their center in the Heavenly Man whose mind melts all into Himself. The dream-story writer is a transcen-

dentalist who freely explores the supersensory realms. The transcendentalist is the poetic myth-maker, and he is the philosopher of idealism who knows life is dreamed. He is the psychical researcher, the scientist of the mind; and he is the occultist who charts the realms of existence (Earth-world, Mid-world, Heaven-world, God-world) and knows them as states of the soul (waking, dreaming, deep sleep, spirit waking). And he may be a mystic, who is sometimes myth-maker, idealist, psychical researcher, and occultist — all four. The transcendentalist-dreamer explores the world within the self, the Collective Psyche. This is the dream world ordered by the occult laws of the dream story.

More fundamental than law and memory and imagery is the emotional content of the dream story, which is mystical. The intensification of the primary, primitive emotions of love and fear frequently brings the sense of the numinous and the mystic "vision" or ecstasy. Romantic love and humanitarian love, with their inevitable fears and sorrows, are an echo or a promise of the mystical feelings characteristic of the dream phantasy. The sense of the numinous is a glimpse into the Mid-world and Heaven-world. It comes with intense fear and agony, and submerges the self that is merely human. It comes with a mixture of love and fear and finds expression in reverence, spiritual wonder, and infinite yearning. The ecstatic mystic vision is the indefinable emotion which is of the Heaven-world (deep sleep) and God-world (spirit waking). It is the fearful joy of freedom, the gratification of all desire, or the annihilating experience of the Infinite. Mystic vision is ecstasy, Illumination. But transformation and the passing beyond all emotion into á permanent spirit-waking state is the Unitive Life, Union with the Absolute. This state is not a dreaming state, but may be suggested to the mystical dream-story writer by certain mystical feelings and dream phenomena. It is Perfect Love: a state of active love in which the faculties of will and intellect and emotion are not distinguished but participate in the indivisible, divine love that goes out, sacrificing, to all life. It is disinterested love: an exalted state of non-attachment, freedom, and exhilaration. The Unitive Life is characterized by peaceful joy, enhanced powers, and intense faith or certitude. Obviously the dream-story writer is not a mystic in the full sense of the word, but he is one of the mystics of literature and expresses mystical themes seldom expressed in other prose fiction. He goes deep within and through the Heavenly Man, headlong into the spiritual Center; and his literature of power half convinces the sceptic that the mystic who knows by unknowing may indeed transform men into the Life that is better than life.

In the above paragraphs I have described a dream story which is, in tendency, autobiographical, mythological, poetical, transcendental, and mystical. It is a short, dreamlike prose fiction; that is, its elements and

values are those of dreams or visions described and analyzed by the psychologists. Each of our dream stories reveals some dream qualities, and several of them are almost completely dreamlike. The tendency is centripetal toward the innermost self which coincides with the occult Psyche and its mystic Source, one and indivisible.

The practical reader may not see the relevance of the transcendental dream story; he may not see the relation between the world and the dream, the world of dreams and the world of actuality. To the practical reader our definition of the dream story is incomplete; to him the dream phantasy is not significant unless it has some "social significance." The mystic of literature is seldom concerned with social significance; he values the intense certitude derived from absolute experience, and he sees that men's planned activities in the relative world proceed from speculation. Nevertheless his dream stories have suggestions, hints, and implications interesting to the practical reader. His practical methods of transforming, or reforming, mankind are probably those of the mystics.

Traditionally, humanity has used, in its attempt to "turn heavenwards," two very different methods — the mechanical and the monastic. The object of machinery is to do part of man's work of getting a living so that man will have more free time; and the purpose of spiritual societies (monasteries, religious orders, etc.) is to develop the spiritual nature of man. But since the rise of modern industry, the machine has threatened the effectiveness of the monastery. With the abnormal progress of the industrial machine have come division of labor, specialization, concentration of wealth and power, imperialism and modern war, love of pleasure and luxury, much restlessness and busyness, and a high regard for the social or "merely human." What is needed, says De Quincey, is a retarding of this "colossal pace of advance," or "counter-forces . . . in the direction of religion or profound philosophy that shall radiate centrifugally against this storm of life so perilously centripetal towards the vortex of the merely human." Perhaps the implication is that practical life should become centrifugal or less centripetal, so that spiritual life may become more centripetal. The dream story does seem to be a plea for the simpler life, and to name and describe the true leaders: the mystic hero, who will inspire and reform us, and the psychical researcher, who will call our attention to nonphysical phenomena. The dream story also seems to be a plea for the decentralization of society in all its practical aspects, especially the economic and the political. Over-specialization, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few people representing corporation, state, or combination of states — these must disappear with the formation of many small, relatively autonomous groups or societies.

The societies, like the traditional spiritual societies, will be in the best interests of both the ideal individual (the complete, undivided, free man) and the ideal world federation, whose power is of the Christ King, not of the socio-political animal called man.

Thus the dream story suggests, I think, a social program that is centrifugal: reform through mystic heroes and psychical researchers, and decentralism. This social program is what the dream story suggests to me. But of this we may be sure: spiritually (aesthetically and philosophically) the dream story is centripetal, and practically — in its relation to the practical world — it is centrifugal; its full significance is concave and convex. The mystical dream story has a convex or practical aspect because it is one of the "counter-forces . . . in the direction of religion or profound philosophy that . . . radiate centrifugally against the storm of life so perilously centripetal towards the vortex of the merely human." Its significance, therefore, is essentially spiritual (aesthetic and philosophic): in tendency the dream story is "religion or profound philosophy." The dream story is a short prose fiction that is dreamlike; it is autobiographical, mythical, poetic, transcendental, and mystic; and it is not insignificant or inconsequential. Of the seventy-four dream stories written by eminent British authors of the nineteenth century, several are of some reputation or high literary merit, and many are particularly interesting to the literary critic and philosopher; the dream story has a "place," however small, in the world of prose fiction.

VITA

John Wilson Lewis was born May 15, 1909, in Harrisburg, Illinois, where he attended the public schools. After graduating from the Harrisburg Township High School, in 1927, he enrolled in the University of Illinois, where he received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1931, and his Master of Arts degree in 1933. Until 1937 he taught in secondary schools. Since February, 1938, he has been an Assistant in English at the University of Illinois.